

# The Classical Argument

Although Aristotle and Cicero devised a system of argumentation over two thousand years ago, the elements of the classical oration still influence contemporary attitudes and styles of argumentation.

The classical oration consists of six parts:

1. **Exordium** – hooking attention and introducing the subject
2. **Narratio** – presenting context and background
3. **Partitio** – dividing up the subject and stating the claim, key issues, and organization
4. **Confirmatio** – logical reasoning and factual evidence supporting the claim
5. **Refutatio** – acknowledging and then refuting opposing claims or evidence
6. **Peroratio** – summary and call to action

Anyone writing prior to the twentieth century had no other model than the classical oration, and even the more contemporary argument models base their structures on this classical system. The classical argument structure has been modified slightly for contemporary writing:

## 1. **Introduction** (Exordium)

- Gains reader's interest and willingness to listen
  - Establishes writer's qualifications to write about the topic
  - Establishes some common ground with the audience
  - Demonstrates fairness and evenhandedness
- States the claim (Partitio), often in enthymeme form (see below).

## 2. **Background** (Narratio)

- Contextualizes the topic
- Presents any necessary information important to the argument

## 3. **Lines of Argument** (Confirmatio)

- Presents good reasons, including logical and emotional appeals, in support of the claim
- Provides strong examples to support reasons

## 4. **Alternative Arguments** (Counterarguments and refutation) (Refutatio)

- Examines alternative points of view and opposing arguments
- Notes advantages and disadvantages of these views
- Explains why the writer's point of view is better than others

## 5. **Conclusion** (Peroratio)

- Elaborates on the implications of the claim

- Makes clear what the writer's audience is supposed to think or do
- Reinforces writer's credibility and sometimes offers an emotional appeal, depending upon the claim and the social action required.

## Enthymemes

An enthymeme is a type of syllogism: a claim that consists of two premises logically leading to a conclusion.

1. Premise: Pugs are dogs.
2. Premise: Dogs are mammals.
3. Conclusion: Therefore, pugs are mammals.

An enthymeme is a specific syllogism where one of the premises is left unstated:

Pugs are dogs; therefore, they are mammals.

Marshall, Teri. APSI 2018. St. Mary's Hall, 2018.

Lunsford, Andrea A., John J. Ruszkiewicz, and Keith Walters. Everything's an Argument. 7th ed. Bedford/St. Martin's, 2016, pp. 130-142.